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Chair: Mr. Skinner-Klée Arenales ..... (Guatemala)

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

Agenda item 26: Agriculture development, food security and nutrition (*continued*)
(A/73/69-E/2018/47, A/73/287 and A/73/293)

1. **Ms. Lora-Santos** (Philippines), expressing alarm about the rising level of world hunger described in the report of the Secretary-General on agriculture development, food security and nutrition (A/73/293) and *The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2018*, said that food security was threatened by climate change, instability and conflict in many countries. Agriculture played a key role in the economy of the Philippines, where farming, fisheries and forestry employed one third of the labour force. Worldwide, families managing more than 500 million farms produced more than 80 per cent of the planet's food. For that reason, her country had strongly supported the General Assembly resolution on the United Nations Decade of Family Farming (2019–2028). Her Government was investing in the farming and fishing sectors to boost production and eradicate poverty; initiatives included a programme to facilitate access to loans for families engaged in small-scale farming and fishing.

2. The Philippines encouraged the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), which had conducted a study on food consumption in the country and was focusing on food security and nutrition there, to continue working with entities such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in areas best addressed at the regional level, including agricultural research and a harmonized system of food labelling. The United Nations and the broader international community should help Member States to enforce greater accountability among government and international agencies engaged in efforts to tackle food insecurity and malnutrition. Developing countries needed more assistance to deal with those issues in times of conflict and disaster. The Philippines welcomed the proposal to declare 7 June each year as World Food Safety Day.

3. **Mr. Outhaithip** (Lao People's Democratic Republic) said that agriculture employed more than 70 per cent of the labour force in his country. His Government set great store by developing agriculture and implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular Goal 2. It had set up a national committee for nutrition in 2009 and was implementing a related plan of action and strategy. Other measures included capacity-building for the farmers' association, improving agricultural infrastructure, upgrading technology and facilitating farmers' access to financial products. His country was also working with ASEAN to implement the integrated food security framework and strategic plan of action on food security in the ASEAN region for the period 2015–2020 as well as the strategic plan of action for ASEAN cooperation on forestry (2016–2025).

4. The Lao People's Democratic Republic faced considerable problems. Unexploded ordnance rendered most farmland unsafe and areas under irrigation were limited. Other challenges included rainfall-dependent farming practices, livestock disease, limited financial resources and low resilience to climate change and natural disasters. Indeed, in 2018, the worst floods in the country's history had caused loss of life and considerable damage to crops and infrastructure. Nonetheless, with the support of development partners, United Nations agencies and other stakeholders, the Government had improved mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and gathering information on food security and nutrition.

5. **Mr. Panabokke** (Sri Lanka), noting with particular concern that more than 151 million children under the age of 5 years suffered from stunting and a further 50 million from wasting, said that sustainable farming, rural development and investment in the agriculture sector were vital to breaking the cycle of poverty, hunger and malnutrition. Sri Lanka had a strong farming tradition but climate change had become a major threat to the country's rice farmers in particular. Rising temperatures and erratic rainfall had led, in 2016, to the country's worst drought in more than 40 years and, the following year, to severe flooding. The resulting destruction of domestic crops had serious implications for food production.

6. The Government had set in motion several policies and plans to mitigate the impact of climate change and introduced climate-smart farming initiatives, including rainwater harvesting, crop diversification, greater leveraging of technology and the planting of crops that were more resistant to the effects of climate change. Moreover, under its national nutrition policy, initiatives had been launched to ensure that adequate food was available to all. Sri Lanka was working closely with United Nations agencies, such as the World Food Programme (WFP) to enhance food security and nutrition, and the United Nations Children's Fund to improve child and maternal nutrition.

7. **Mr. Andambi** (Kenya) said that his country supported calls by the Secretary-General for urgent action to foster sustainable food production systems. In Kenya, agriculture accounted directly for 24 per cent of

gross domestic product (GDP) and indirectly for a further 27 per cent. It contributed 45 per cent of government revenue, made up half of the country's export earnings and generated 60 per cent of job opportunities. The livelihood of more than four fifths of the rural population was derived from agriculture-related activities. Alongside manufacturing, universal health coverage and affordable housing, food security and nutrition were a focus of national policy. His Government planned to extend the land under maize, potato and rice cultivation in a private-public partnership; the production of maize and potatoes was expected to increase by more than half by 2022. Contract farmers would supply the strategic food reserve and investments would be made to reduce post-harvest losses. Moreover, fish landing sites on Lake Victoria would be rehabilitated.

8. Drought and famine continued to plague the Horn of Africa; in parts of northern Kenya, global acute malnutrition rates exceeded 30 per cent. The Government had therefore introduced a three-pronged policy approach to food security addressing supply, price and income. Initiatives with regard to supply included subsidies, improved research and rural infrastructure, the extension of credit for farming and the development of rural markets and business skills among farmers. The purchase by the Government of maize at above-market rates had stabilized prices for that crop and boosted strategic food reserves. The provision of free education and reduced public health-care costs had left people with more disposable income to spend on food.

9. The Government was subsidizing fertilizers and considering crop stockpiles as a way to meet the needs of people in drought-stricken regions. Kenya set much store by science, technology and innovation and, in particular, advances in seed and irrigation technology, and had co-hosted a side event on data to end hunger during the high-level segment of the seventy-third session of the General Assembly. Almost one quarter of all agricultural technology start-ups in Africa were launched in Kenya; business innovation in the agriculture sector was a key to ensuring food security. Equally, partnerships between academia and the private and public sectors, increased and quality investment in the farming sector and the use of technology and new data sources were all crucial to achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2 and tackling climate change.

10. **Mr. Coulibaly** (Mali) said that the agriculture sector was the mainstay of the Malian economy, accounting for 30 per cent of GDP and employing nearly four fifths of the workforce. The country had made great strides in reducing the number of people suffering from hunger or malnutrition. Nonetheless, it faced considerable challenges, including the food and nutritional security of a growing population; natural resource management in the context of climate change; the need to improve productivity and the competitiveness of the country's farm goods on national, subregional and international markets; the need to protect and increase farmers' income; water management; the administration of producer organizations; and farmers' access to credit.

11. With a view to enhancing technology in agricultural production and improving the agriculture value chain, his Government had enacted legislation covering all economic activities in the agriculture sector. A national agricultural development policy had been developed and a committee headed by the President was overseeing its implementation. Considerable efforts had been made to increase and mechanize agricultural production, including through the establishment of tractor assembly plants and the distribution of 1,000 tractors to farmers, the implementation of measures to secure land tenure and the provision of subsidies. For the fifth consecutive year, the Government had allocated 15 per cent of the national budget to agriculture, exceeding its commitment under the Maputo Declaration on Agriculture and Food Security in Africa. The implementation of the Government's national food security and nutrition policy had led to an annual rise of 8 per cent in cereals production between 2012 and 2017. Further joint efforts by all development actors were needed to achieve Goal 2.

12. **Ms. van Veen** (Finland) said that plant health was a key to food security. The spread of pests and disease posed a significant threat to agriculture and the environment — a threat that was heightened by the increase in international trade in agricultural commodities, online trade, and travel. Each year, damage to crops by invasive pests resulted in agricultural trade losses of $220 billion. Pests were also one of the prime factors in biodiversity loss. As they often had no natural enemies, they could outcompete native species for resources. Africa was beset by a pest epidemic and parts of Europe were affected by olive tree disease. In spite of the growing risk posed by the spread of pests, many countries were allocating fewer resources to plant health research and services. Finland was therefore proposing that 2020 be declared the International Year of Plant Health to raise awareness of the importance of plant health for food security, poverty eradication and the environment. She hoped that the initiative would stimulate scientific innovation to counter the threat of pests, responsible practices to

contain their spread, and support for more sustainable plant health strategies and services. The initiative had been well received at the fortieth session of the FAO Conference in 2017 and her delegation looked forward to obtaining the support of the Second Committee too.

13. **Mr. Rahmanto** (Indonesia) said that, with undernourishment on the rise, it was the responsibility of all to create conditions conducive to achieving the four pillars of food security: availability, access, utilization and stability. In Indonesia, the authorities were investing heavily in rural development and infrastructure, focusing on land reform and promoting social forestry with a view to enabling communities living in and around forest areas to manage their food sources sustainably. By investing in the diversification and improved quality of local staple foods, the authorities were encouraging self-sufficient food production, especially in areas with high rates of poverty and food insecurity and those covered by the national programme to combat stunting. The labour-intensive activities involved would also strengthen the economy of those areas. In addition, efforts were under way to connect farmers to the market digitally, which would boost their income. Access to education, clean water and sanitation was a key to providing food security, which was also seriously threatened by climate change. Technology transfer and innovations in the food supply chain would contribute to increasing the quality and quantity of food production.

14. **Mr. Parajuli** (Nepal) said that increasing food insecurity created not only a developmental, but also a humanitarian challenge. Poverty was one of the main drivers of hunger. Four fifths of the extreme poor lived in rural areas and depended largely on agriculture for their livelihoods. The underlying causes of hunger and poverty must therefore be addressed together by raising incomes and productivity, securing the tenure rights of small landholders and creating employment. Investment in agriculture must be scaled up significantly, especially in those countries that were furthest behind; almost one quarter of the population in least developed countries faced food insecurity. Local and indigenous food systems required protection to ensure food security and preserve genetic diversity. Rising urban food insecurity must also be tackled.

15. Growing uncertainty regarding the multilateral trading system was having an adverse impact on the economies of developing countries, in which agriculture accounted for a significant share of GDP, exports and jobs. The fundamental right to food was enshrined in the Constitution of Nepal, a landlocked least developed country. Boosting agricultural productivity through modernization was a priority for the Government, which in 2016 had launched an action plan to eliminate hunger and malnutrition by 2025. Affordable, sustainable and regularly upgraded farm technology that was resistant to the impact of climate change was essential for the development and prosperity of least developed countries.

16. **Mr. Tiare** (Burkina Faso) said that the right of all to adequate food was enshrined in international programmes and instruments, such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The economy of Burkina Faso relied heavily on farming, animal husbandry and mining. Agriculture accounted for 40 per cent of GDP and 84 per cent of jobs. The main crops were sorghum, millet, corn, rice, peanuts and cotton. The sector faced a variety of difficulties: desertification and climate change; a lack of storage infrastructure; natural plant cover loss; and the effect of disease and invasive pests. The Government did not have the budgetary wherewithal to carry out its policies and programmes for achieving food security by 2025 and therefore relied on the support of the international community.

17. The International Year of Pulses in 2016 had contributed to raising public awareness of the nutritional value of pulses and promoting that branch of farming, as had been noted in the report of the Secretary-General on that subject (A/73/287). His delegation had been encouraged by that success to put forward a draft resolution on declaring 10 February World Pulses Day. Promoting the production and consumption of pulses would contribute to food security, public health, efforts to combat poverty and climate change, and the empowerment of women and young people, who made up the bulk of those employed in the branch. He urged all Member States to become sponsors of the draft resolution and facilitate its adoption.

18. **Mr. Alkadi** (Saudi Arabia), declaring that food security, especially in developing countries, was one of the most pressing issues of the day, said that Saudi Arabia was in the vanguard of countries stepping up to address the global food crisis. Through the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and in cooperation with WFP, his country had allocated around $700 million to food and water security, environmental sanitation and nutrition projects. The prime beneficiaries had been Somalia, the Syrian Arab Republic, Yemen and displaced and refugee Rohingya populations in Myanmar and Bangladesh.

19. In line with the 2030 Agenda and his country's Vision 2030 programme, the Government had launched a range of strategies to contain poverty and strengthen food security, maintain the price stability of certain

goods and support organizations assisting persons on low incomes. One goal was to reduce the sugar, salt and saturated and trans fats content of food products and ensure that they were otherwise free of harmful substances. Companies were obliged to display the calorie content of food products on packaging. Other national strategies included establishing a system of high-quality, sustainable food production, guaranteeing the diversity and stability of external food sources and access to safe and nutritious food, encouraging healthy eating habits and building capacity to tackle food security risks.

20. A Saudi initiative to promote agricultural investment abroad operated in line with the guidelines of specialized agencies aiding developing countries with regard to inward investment, the creation of infrastructure, incentives for the sustainable use of soil and water resources, broadening the market prospects for agricultural goods, and fostering economic development in host countries and ensuring food security for their people. Host countries should create conditions conducive to such investment. A concerted international effort was imperative to eliminate the twin scourges of hunger and poverty and fulfil the vision of the United Nations for sustainable development by 2030.

21. **Monsignor Grysa** (Observer for the Holy See) said that his delegation shared the conclusion of the Secretary-General that, based on current trends, hunger would not be eradicated by 2030 (A/73/293, para. 65). It had become clear that, while humanitarian assistance was critical for averting famine, it was insufficient to address the root causes of hunger and starvation. Additional investment in agriculture and improved conditions for agricultural trade were both rapid and effective means of transferring income to some of the world's poorest farmers. Where countries were unable to attract private investment, Governments must step in to increase their productive capacity.

22. The problem of hunger and malnutrition was exacerbated by violent conflict, which at the same time fuelled underdevelopment, massive displacement of populations and grave violations of human rights, and also by the unequitable distribution of abundant food production, waste and overconsumption. For some, the solution to world hunger lay in reducing the number of mouths to feed. As Pope Francis had pointed out, however, that was a false solution given the levels of waste and squandering of resources. To reduce was easy, the Pope had said, while to share was more demanding. Food security rested on the principle of humanity; to love one's neighbour was a guarantee not only of food security, but of human security in the broadest sense.

23. **Ms. Mucavi** (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)), speaking also on behalf of the International Fund for Agricultural Development and the World Food Programme, said that, alongside hunger, levels of obesity were rising at an alarming rate in developing countries, often coexisting with undernourishment in the same households. Unhealthy diets were responsible for 6 out of 10 risk factors for non-communicable diseases, which had an adverse impact on people's well-being, public budgets and national economies. Sustainable agriculture and food systems were the key to ensuring a world without hunger and poverty, reversing overweight and obesity trends, addressing non-communicable diseases and sustainably managing and using natural resources.

24. Another symptom of broken food systems was the predominance of hunger and extreme poverty in rural areas. Rural actors often had limited access to land, water, credit and markets and were more vulnerable to the effects of climate change, especially drought. Food insecurity and inequality had to be tackled through social protection and pro-poor and gender-sensitive growth programmes and the empowerment of rural actors. A new rural-urban alliance was needed to stimulate entrepreneurship, create jobs for rural youth, provide nutritious food for urban dwellers and ensure decent incomes for farmers. Domestic and international investments must be mobilized to bring about a paradigm shift to sustainable, healthy and inclusive food systems. Reliable, comprehensive and disaggregated data were also needed to implement and monitor evidence-based policies.

The meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.